



Walton First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Updates February 15, 2025

March Celebrations

Birthdays

2nd: Betty Johnston

13th: Eliose Kelly

26th: Paige Clark

On the Calendar

Sunday, March 2: Sanctuary Worship and **Communion** 10:15 am; Sunday School; Coffee Hour, hosted by Nancy Grotevant; **Ministry Committee Meeting**

Tuesday/Thursday, March 4 & 6: Chair Yoga 11:00 am-12:00 pm

Wednesday, March 5: **Ash Wednesday Service 4:00 pm**

Saturday, March 8: Gathering Table 11:30 am-1:00 pm

Sunday, March 9: Sanctuary Worship 10:15 am; Sunday School; **Prudential Board following worship**

Tuesday/Thursday, March 11 & 13: Chair Yoga 11:00 am-12:00 pm

Sunday, March 16: Sanctuary Worship 10:15 am; Sunday School

Saturday, March 22: Gathering Table 11:30 am-1:00 pm

Sunday, March 23: Sanctuary Worship 10:15 am; Sunday School

Tuesday/Thursday, March 25 & 27: Chair Yoga 11:00 am-12:00 pm

Sunday, March 30: Sanctuary Worship 10:15 am; Sunday School

Elijah's Closet: Fridays and Saturdays 10 am-2 pm




Member Updates

Please place your non-perishable food and toiletry donations in the wagon located at the back of the sanctuary. Lorraine Davila will drive donations to the food bank the last Tuesday of each month.

If you have anything that you would like included in our bi-monthly Updates, please contact April at 607-865-4066 or secretary@uccwalton.com

Board Updates

Ash Wednesday



God always forgives us

Begin the Lenten season with prayer and reflection as we receive ashes, a symbol of repentance and renewal.

March 5th, 4:00 pm



Don't forget to sign up for Coffee Hour, if you are able. We are still in need of hosts for May and June

On Sunday, 2/23, twenty-four members of our congregation met for lunch and strategic planning at Packin' Heat in Walton.

- We began with a table activity, writing prayers to share.
- The second task was a data gathering activity known as snowballs. Each of us independently and anonymously completed a 5-question survey:
 1. The most important thing about church for me . . .
 2. SWOT-What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats?

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3. In 2025 we should focus our time, efforts, and money on . . .
 4. We will know we're successful when . . .
 5. We will know **it's time to close when . . .**
- **Our responses were wadded into "snowballs" and thrown into a basket. We then randomly distributed snowballs to each table for analysis, facilitating easy discussion around the anonymity of the responses.**
 - Over a delicious lunch, we tabulated the responses, looking for patterns and outliers that will guide our Prudential Board over the next few months.

○ Our summary:

1. The most important thing about church for me:
 - Feeling safe, inclusive, and sharing God's love**
 - Growing my faith**
 - Family (2)**
 - Fellowship (2)**
 - Guidance**
 - Community service**
 - Members as extended family**
 - Grounding**
 - Sense of community that looks to God for guidance**
 - Being part of something larger than ourselves**

2.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Faith (2) Passion Our beliefs Welcoming/Open & affirming (2) Elijah's Closest Music People/members Leadership Age of church Location (2) Community service Gathering Table Working together	Struggle between tradition and change Age of population (2) Size of population (2) Community demographics Not faith-filled, spirit-driven shared concept
Opportunities	Threats

3. In 2025 we should focus our time, efforts, and money on . . .
 - Community programs/outreach (4)
 - Luncheon (2)
 - Elijah's Closet (2)
 - Social Media
 - Growing membership
 - Support of shut-ins
 - God and faith
4. We will know we're successful when . . .
 - Our numbers increase (3)
 - Outreach is consistent (2)
 - 3 or more families added to worship or programs
 - Everyone's needs are met
 - More programs
5. We will know it's time to close when . . .
 - Numbers decline more (2)
 - Outreach/programs can't continue (3)
 - Never (2)
 - Run out of money (2)
 - We have no pastor (2)

Highlights



Nolan Evans received the Principal's List Award



Keygan Epps received the Superintendent's List Award & Respect Award



Cooper Evans received the Honor Roll Award



Planning Retreat at Packin' Heat 2/23/25

A Devotional & Spiritual Practice from Pastor Janet

Sense and Sensibility by Ellis Miller

Jesus said to all the people: "Why don't you understand the right thing to do?" - Luke 12:57 (CEV)

These days I find myself quickly overwhelmed by any and all news headlines. What marginalized group is the focus of today's attacks? What impact does a presidential proclamation have and when should I start panicking or packing? Even Hollywood's award season, once a reliable epicenter of movie escapism and gorgeous gowns, is subject to environmental crises and racial injustice that leaves me reeling.

I find that what I'm seeking—from news pundits and policy wonks, pithy memes to viral hot takes—is not just an understanding of what is happening in the world, but someone to tell me how to feel about it or what I should do next. In my overwhelm, I've stopped listening to my inner wisdom and just keep scrolling, certain that the algorithm will help me determine the next best way to respond.

Living through an era defined by bad news and forewarnings of a grim future is nothing new. Jesus spent a fair amount of his sermons alerting people to the rightening times to come, urging folks to look at the signs, and directing them to take heed of what he was saying.

Jesus presented the evidence—which I'm sure overwhelmed his original audience as much as it overwhelms us today—and then asked, "Why don't you understand the right thing to do?"

In other words: You know what is coming, and you know what to do next. You don't need a media alert to tell you to focus on mutual aid. You don't need a succinct slogan to inspire you to act in the name of love. You don't need to wait for an expert to school you in how to love your neighbor.

Prayer

I'm paying attention. I recognize what's happening. Help me to do the right thing.

Spiritual Practice by Vicki Kemper

Many who have gone before you followed the Beloved's Voice, the unknown saints of all generations. They surrendered themselves into the Beloved's hands, and walked with confidence. They were guided through difficult times, keeping to Love's way, and trusting Love's promises. - Psalm 99:6-7 (as written by Nan Merrill, [Psalms for Praying](#))

The words "surrender" and "confidence" don't often appear in the same sentence. We tend to associate surrender with defeat and confidence with ease—and defeat is rarely easy.

But the late Quaker writer Nan C. Merrill suggests that things work differently when we're living in God.

When we think of surrender as opening to a compassionate and merciful Presence, she says, we can walk with assurance, knowing that Spirit has our back and Love is in charge. When we step back from our myopic perspective and take in the long view, we remember that we are not alone.

And, as with most spiritual truths, we experience this grace by practicing it. So here's an exercise to try the next time you're in a panic about a personal problem or in despair about the state of the world:

First, be still. Do some mindful breathing, say a short prayer, or whatever else quiets the monkey mind and allows your heart to soften and open.

Second, name the situation or feeling that's got you going. Get some clarity about what it is, what it's not, and where it's coming from.

Third, as much as you can, release this situation into God's hands. You can always take all or part of it back, but for now let go of your efforts to control it.

Then, take a walk in confidence and gratitude. Repeat as needed.

Prayer

For time-tested practices that ground us in your goodness, we give thanks.

Lifted in Prayer

Dane

Dean Frazier

Elaine Clum

The family of Roy Terney

The family of Vern Wildenstein

The family of Anne Tubridy

Pastor Janet

Macky Moore

Corey Moraglio

Michelle Olson

The family of James Gay

The family of Loren Lewis

The family of Michael Jaques